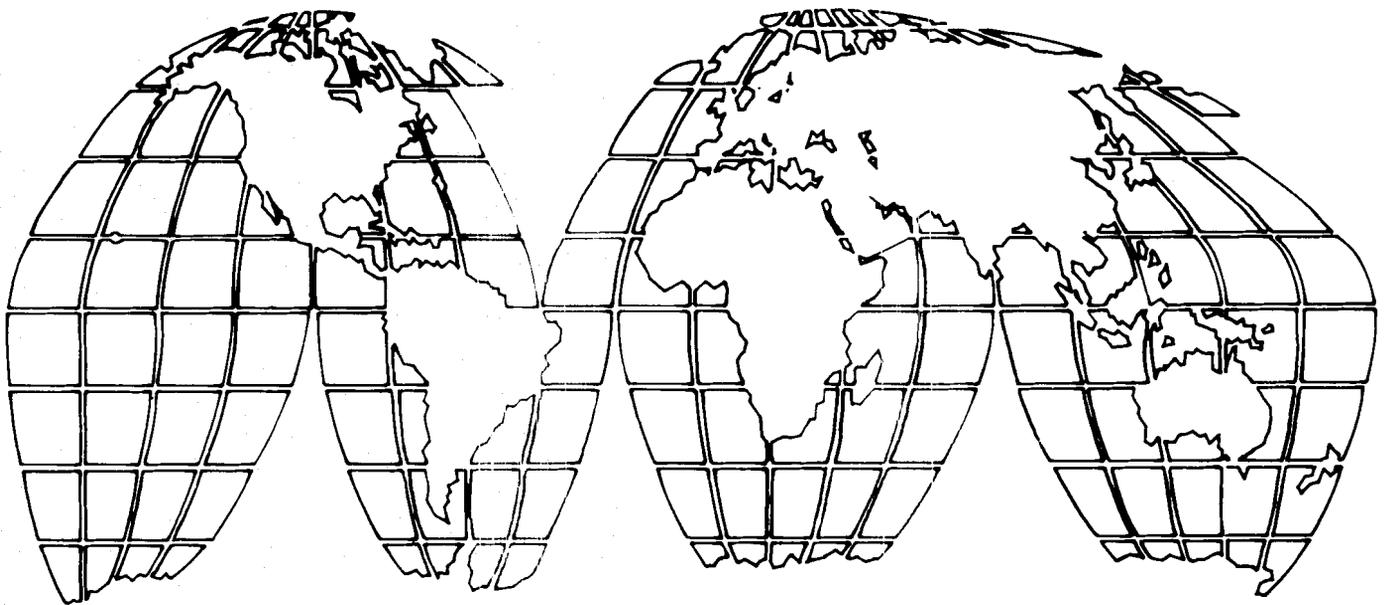


A.I.D. Evaluation Special Study No. 17

Local Government Trends And Performance: Assessment Of AID's Involvement In Latin America



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRENDS AND PERFORMANCE:
Assessment of AID's Involvement In Latin America

A.I.D. Evaluation Special Study No. 17

by

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PREFACE

This paper forms part of a global assessment of the Agency for International Development's (AID) involvement in local government development. It will eventually serve as background to an agency-level policy determination. I hope it will also serve those who study the role and potential of local government and those who seek to apply the lessons of the past in action on the ground. Those readers whose time is limited will find that Section IV summarizes the main points of the analysis.

During the period 1973-1976 I conducted evaluations, provided technical assistance, and helped design local government projects in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama, and Venezuela. I also visited Bolivia briefly to develop a proposal for the municipal development agency there. I then left this area of work to join the Peace Corps' headquarters staff, working on global issues of program policy, planning, and management until 1981.

When my offer to update my prior work was accepted in late 1982 by Twig Johnson in AID's Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, Office of Evaluation (PPC/E), it was Rip Van Winkle-ish, exciting, and frustrating all at once. The ground rules were to do a rapid job, taking into consideration my earlier work and what has happened since in the many areas which touch on local government. I was asked to focus on concerns raised by the AID Administrator, and to build on studies prepared by Development Alternatives (Silverman et al., 1982) and by an Asia study team fielded by PPC (AID, 1983). I was to do this without visiting the field, relying on people and documents available here in Washington or accessible by phone. The excitement came from catching up with old colleagues in the field and learning of developments during the past seven years. The frustration was of course a result of being linked to secondhand information. I am excited also about the changes in awareness and the forward motion that have occurred, and frustrated about the things that have not changed, the "lessons learned" that have not been "lessons applied." Also frustrating is the evidence of continuing unresolved tension between the history of a unified, centralist government system in Latin America on one hand, and the observable needs and rhetoric which push for decentralized development on the other.

Local government is approached from many sides and disciplines. Public administrators, financial management experts, urban and regional planners, rural development and food marketing specialists, and civil engineers all have an angle on the subject. Through readings and interviews, I tapped into the minds of people in all of those fields. The synthesis, however, is my own, and the views and recommendations do not represent those of AID.

The picture presented here may strike some as discouraging, and may be taken as a challenge by others. It's a "mixed bag," as AID noted. But the objective realities are there to be faced--rapid urban growth throughout Latin America outside the primate cities, overloads on central development agencies, and opportunities to build on the network of municipalities to support rural and regional development through more selective strategies. There are numerous institutions and programs worthy of AID's support in the form of capital assistance, institution-building, technology transfer, training, and action research. AID has most of the tools and a long learning curve behind it. Latin American government policies, legal structures, and attitudes are changing. AID can help this move faster.

SUMMARY

Context and History

Latin America has a long tradition of local government, with its roots in the strongly urban culture of colonial Spain. Provincial and departmental governments exist in most Latin American countries, but they serve primarily as extensions of central government, whereas the municipalities are more clearly expressions of local will and administration. The influence and autonomy of the municipality have waxed and waned from the time of independence to the present, reflecting the ongoing tension and cycles of centralization and decentralization of administrative and political power in the various countries.

Trends Since the 1960s

For the last two decades, there has been mounting concern about the capacity of local government. Rapid rural-urban migration, initially a concern for the capitals and other primate cities, has now begun to strain the services and infrastructure of secondary cities and market towns as well. Central government agencies' abilities to install and then maintain basic services and to attend to the planning and growth problems of urban areas is limited. It has also become clear that rural development, in the forms it has been pursued, has not slowed urban growth and may even have contributed to it. Latin Americans have begun to look at the hierarchy of urban places in their countries and at the interaction between rural and urban development.

In response to these pressures, Latin American governments have established municipal development institutions to provide capital, technical assistance, and training to municipalities. Municipal laws have been reformed, and other measures taken to enhance the development capacity of local governments.

AID's Involvement

AID has provided loans and grants to municipal development programs in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, beginning in the mid-1960s. These funds were used to support lending for local infrastructure (water, sewer, public lighting, street paving, and the like), to provide consulting assistance in management and finance, and to develop training programs for local officials.

A comparative evaluation conducted in the early 1970s found that infrastructure development was generally more successful than the institutional reforms and activities. Insufficient attention was paid to strategic programming which would provide assistance as a package (lending as a lever for institutional change) and provide for different treatment of various categories of municipalities in the urban hierarchy.

In reviewing the current fortunes of municipal development programs in the early 1980s, this study finds that the problems found earlier persist. Technical assistance and training efforts lag behind infrastructure creation. Reforms of local government systems and revenue-raising processes are infrequently addressed. Infrastructure is largely urban and social in nature, rather than serving to promote local economic growth (and increased tax bases). The work done on the research and development side of the Agency has not made its way into on-going projects. Lessons learned have not become lessons applied.

Lessons for Application

In Latin America, AID's decision about whether to become involved with the development of local government has already been made, for what in retrospect seem to be good reasons. Municipalities, unlike regional development entities, are permanent institutions with elected representatives. While they seldom meet the ideals posed by the municipalistas and suffer the changing winds of centralization and of urban disdain for rural capacities, they are there to be built up as "enterprises of development." The legal structure is in place, though it needs modernization and institutional support to develop the management skills to make the legal changes effective. Political channels at the local level and between local and national levels exist and are used to express needs. Initiative is being taken by mayors to solve problems with or without central agency involvement, and the full range of management capacities can be seen. With a tradition of private sector development and of the primacy of private landed and commercial interests on municipal councils, integrated private/public development occurs and can be expanded. In many local governments, much needs to be done to break the cycle of low revenues which limit the ability of local government to attract good planners and managers who could devise projects which would improve the tax base, thus allowing more local problems to be solved locally.

AID should probably stay clear of committing resources to local government in countries where there is (1) no interest in municipal reform, (2) no interest in looking at interactions

between rural and urban development, and (3) no interest in integrating or redirecting the efforts of national agencies to support improved municipal capacity.

Where programs are pursued with AID resources, some changes in emphasis from past programs are suggested.

1. As long as funds are to be limited in this area, selectivity is important, picking specific areas of institutional improvement and categories of urban places to be assisted, rather than taking on all manner of changes, projects, and types of communities.
2. Programs should stress certain substantive themes in which the agency is building its own depth of expertise, such as local economic growth, finance and revenue improvements, rural-urban linkages, and most recently, energy-efficient cities.
3. Institutional assistance and training should be aimed to support the above, to build planning and project management skills, service management ability, and financial management.

Finally, this study urges increased cooperation in the Latin American countries with the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank, and the Organization of American States. Each of these agencies is involved with the development to local government and institutions, each with its own perspective and mix of resources, which are often complementary of AID's capacities and interests.

I. CONTEXT AND HISTORY

This section is directed at readers who are not as familiar with the background of local development in Latin America as they would like to be. Those who are may wish to proceed to Section II.

A. Subnational Government in Latin America

Governments in hispanic America are nearly all unitary republics. Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela are federal governments, though their state-level governments have a narrower range of legal and fiscal autonomy than states do in the United States. The next level below the national government in the other Latin American countries is the province or department. This is generally an extension of the central authority, presided over by a centrally appointed governor, and the site of provincial offices of national agencies. Next in the hierarchy is the municipality, called variously by that name (municipio), or district, canton, or mayorality (alcaldía). There may be more than one level of municipality, as in Peru, which has provincial and district municipios, but this is more the exception than the rule. Municipalities may be subdivided into barrios, corregimientos in Panama, or other community units. Finally, in nearly all of Latin America, there is a network of special-purpose community groups concerned with health, agriculture, roads, cooperative marketing, or neighborhood betterment. These may be private, spontaneous associations, political groups, or groups organized by government or private agencies for community development or other participatory purposes.

Another form of administrative/development body has arisen during the last 20 years in many countries, the regional development authority. A study conducted in 1977 surveyed 45 of these entities located in nine hispanic American countries and Haiti (CINDER, 1976). These areas of operation may coincide with political boundaries, such as the Departmental Development Corporations in Bolivia, or may conform to watershed or other cross-cutting geographic definitions such as the Cauca Valley Corporation in Colombia. The significance of this development is discussed in Section II.

B. Local Government and Towns in Latin American History

The municipality is the oldest form of subnational government in the Spanish-speaking countries. Its roots go back to Spain, which was a town-based culture from the time of the

Punics and Greeks, who established places later embellished and promoted by the Romans and Moors (Schurz, 1964). In Spain during the reign of Charles V, towns were governed by cabildos, councils of noble landowners described as "relatively democratic" (Crow, 1946). The town and the concept of the cabildo were brought to the Americas by the Spanish explorers and viceroys. More than one source describes how Hernan Cortez, before marching west to confront Montezuma, laid out the central plaza of the town of Vera Cruz, and named a mayor and town council to run what was still a camp on the beach (Schurz, 1964). Except in the highly indigenous countries (Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala), Latin America continues to this day to be town- and city-based, rather than village-based, in contrast to Africa and Asia.

During the colonial era, towns were established according to guidelines from Madrid, covering location, desired climate, and arrangement of streets, plazas, churches, the municipal hall, and other features (Schurz, 1964). The cabildos were to look after public works, exert some judicial authority, and express the general consensus on matters of municipal government. Members during the early colonial period were named by the viceroys, a kind of house of lords. These men of property had considerable autonomy in running their towns, including exacting tribute from town dwellers and farmers in the area (Crow, 1946).

The role of these municipal councils declined near the end of the colonial period as membership on the councils was auctioned, and central power to control affairs (including taxation) grew. During early independence (and even before it), the cabildos were the source of anti-Spanish rebellion in Asuncion, Buenos Aires, and Lima. Municipal councils continue to this day to be largely composed of landowners (town-based, but holding extensive agricultural land), business people, and professionals. Their politics are related closely to national parties and changes in power.

The cities established during colonization continue into the present to be the important urban centers. Capitals tend to be in the high, spring-climate areas sited by the Spaniards on advice from Madrid. Secondary cities continue to serve their purposes as ports, strategic points for defense, or centers of rich agricultural potential.

Schurz describes the attitude of Latin America toward their cities and towns:

The cities are forever striving for their greater adornment and distinction. To that common end, their administrative leaders, and their engineers and architects combine their efforts in the tasks of city

planning. Dictators and presidents, and mayors... make it their particular ambition to leave the city a more imposing and stately thing than they found it.... It is seldom that their personal vainglorious overreach themselves, though other crying needs of the country may have to be sacrificed to provide the all-important metropolis with new avenues and monuments and sumptuous public buildings, and such practical accessories to daily life as markets and waterworks and sewage systems (pp. 365-366).

The municipality as an institution has gone through highs and lows during the last 200 years. There have been periods of enthusiasm for strengthening it, but often these decentralization schemes were more legalistic and rhetorical than effective (Austin, 1976). The central, unitary governments, powerful national party movements and struggles, and a cultural tradition of paternalism have often left the municipality in the backwash of change. They have been limited to a few essentially urban functions, taxation authority has been diminished, and their ability to attract and keep talented people has been limited.

C. A Municipality Depicted

Based on research in 1983, the picture of a municipality of say 10,000 people observed in the early 1970s in Central America has not changed much in the last decade. In virtually all of Latin America a municipality "governs" not only a town but its surrounding rural area, much like a county in the rural United States. It operates within a framework of law which may date back to colonial times, amended and adjusted continually since that time. The Agency for International Development (AID) provided a grant to the National Urban Development Service (SENDU) of Bolivia to analyze municipal law. They assembled the legislation for the period 1826-1876, without commentary, and it totaled over 400 pages! (Kent, 1980). Many public rules under our common law system are expressed as policies, laws, regulations, practices, or interpretations of the constitutions and laws by the courts. Latin America follows the Roman tradition, under which all is law or regulation, and duly studied, passed or decreed, codified, and compiled.

Within this framework, an elected or appointed mayor, often not a professional administrator, must master some of the oldest as well as the most current laws about taxation, public services, public safety, and the rest of the functions of the "autonomous" municipality.

The town council meets behind closed doors (except in the case of a matter which under law calls for a cabildo abierto, or open session). The old town hall (or maybe a new one, built in the late 1950s or early 1960s) has a few offices for municipal staff, and probably some space used by the subregional extension office or the national water authority. Property and tax records are stacked around desks, on floors, or in bulging cabinets. They are kept either by old men or young women. The town engineer may or may not be an engineer--more likely a work gang foreman. There are one or two dump trucks and a few workers who fix potholes, possibly collect trash (for which a fee may or may not be collected), and report breakdowns in water supply or electricity to the parastatal agencies which provide the service.

Heads of departments may be more political than administrative in orientation, and often spend as much time in their personal businesses as on civic duties. In the corridors there are always a few people waiting to complain or present a petition for a community need.

The town budget is based on last year's figures, and generally overestimates income from a bewildering array of petty taxes and an outdated property tax structure. The budget underestimates expenditures, overwhelmingly for personnel and plant operation, with a minimum for maintenance and almost nothing for investment in services, facilities, or civic improvements. These funds will come from central grants, development corporation projects, or national programs. The few local investment funds shown are for repainting the central park or repairing curbs in the commercial district. This budget will be sent to the national controller general's office to be routinely noted and approved. Deficits will be made up through central grants arranged by the local representative to the national government, or by "borrowing" from a public service (such as street lighting) that apparently is running a surplus. Since there is no real cost accounting for that service, the surplus may in fact be a real loss.

Development planning, whether social, physical, or economic, is seldom a matter for the municipal leaders. It happens to them, around them, sometimes in spite of them, but seldom is it done by them. Projects may be proposed by groups of townspeople, generally professionals or merchants, but rarely do people expect the municipality to extend services or infrastructure to them. Rural groups take their community resolutions to local offices of national agencies or to private development groups like Caritas or CARE. The city fathers are likely to pass the urban groups' requests on to higher authorities, seldom having the skills needed to study the project, fund it, hire a contractor, implement the construction, and manage it after it is in place. During the course of the year,

the mayor and his staff may be interviewed by any number of national technicians, international experts, or other technocrats. They may or may not know or understand the purpose of the interview and the data base or decisions to which it will be added, or be informed about the resulting plans, policies, priorities, or projects.

I could continue with this profile, but perhaps the point is made. There are, of course, exceptions to this depiction. There are towns which have taken more control of their destinies, who open up their decision-making to rural as well as urban people, who actively pursue national resources, rather than waiting for them or passively accepting them (and paying the bill later). There are, of course, worse situations, where the municipality is almost purely ceremonial, the office of mayor a continually revolving door, and almost no one bothers to present a petition or complaint.

This general profile, observed repeatedly, shows the symptoms of a vicious cycle. Municipalities have limited funds (taxes not taken advantage of, poorly administered, not worth collecting, and so forth), and therefore cannot attract talented people, so they have few programs or projects to attract funds, respect, or credibility, from either the local populace or development agencies. Lacking projects, especially those of an economic stimulus nature, they do not improve their tax base or income, and so we come full circle. National and regional planners and agency executives ignore the municipality or work around it. Community developers bypass the municipality and direct their resource requests to regional development corporations or provincial offices of national agencies.

II. TRENDS SINCE THE 1960s

In spite of the disheartening picture presented above of a town of 10,000 people, the advancement of the municipality as an "enterprise of development" (the words of a grand municipalista, Armando Arauz Aguilar of Costa Rica) has been an aim of many in Latin America. This goal has attracted support from AID, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other agencies. Larger cities and towns have attracted investment by international housing programs, banks, and companies, where such legal authority existed. Why the interest? It springs from a combination of (a) faith in the potential of the institution, and (b) the realities of development trends in Latin America. During the past 20 years, and apparently even more during the last seven, local government has become a focus of students of public finance, regional planning, rural development, and other areas of development. Let us look at (b), the realities, first.

A. Development Trends Affecting Localities

According to Robert Fox, sociologist and demographer at the Inter-American Development Bank, and to Eric Chetwynd of AID, Latin America is urbanizing at an astounding rate (Fox interview, 1983; Baldwin and Chetwynd, 1979). While the populations of Latin American countries are growing, rural population growth is relatively flat. Projections compiled by Fox from an organization in Chile are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Urban and Rural Population Projections
in Latin American Countries
(in millions)

Year	Rural	Urban	Total
1980	129	223	352
2000	148	402	550
2025	164	680	844

These figures need little discussion. The number of people who will be dumped on cities during the next 40 years is astounding. Fox further maintains that the earlier trend of this growth being concentrated in primate or capital cities and major industrial centers is changing. Secondary and tertiary cities and towns are growing at about the same rate as the metropolises. Baldwin and Chetwynd drew on Fox's data to observe that in the larger countries of Latin America, nonprimate cities of 250,000 or more are growing most rapidly, and that in Central America and Panama where everything is on a smaller scale, cities of 10,000-50,000 are growing most rapidly. In 1950 there were 26 towns of this size in the Central America/Panama subregion. The authors projected that by 1980 there would be 95. The urban structure of the region is changing dramatically, and is ill-prepared to manage the growth.

The national decision-makers in the capitals worry about the growing concentration of people and lack of resources in the primate cities. Since the 1960s, a range of approaches has been tried to slow primate city growth, hold back or divert rural-urban migration, deconcentrate investment and related employment, and upgrade the quality of opportunities and life

in rural and small-town areas of the continent. Richard Rhoda has noted that rural development has probably had little effect on slowing urban growth, and in fact may have contributed to it (Rhoda, 1979). His assessment is that projects to build or upgrade rural roads, increase the commercialization of agriculture, improve rural education levels, extend agricultural credit and technology, and create off-farm employment have stimulated migration to urban areas in most instances. And these are the very programs that international development donors have helped to design and have supported actively.

As these forces gathered momentum and development planners' awareness of them grew, the focus shifted to regional and urban programs alongside rural development. In the 1950s and 1960s, the decentralization of major investments to "growth poles" was in vogue in Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia. Large investments in industry and infrastructure were made in already large cities, with little effect on the migration or primacy problems. Rural development became the emphasis in the 1960s, until the evidence began to mount that many of the interventions were having the unexpected effects cited above. The Allende Government in Chile is credited with conceptualizing "integrated decentralization." The Chileans recognized that (a) urban migration was a fact of life, (b) central agencies were overburdened while local government was being kept weak, and (c) stimulation of rural development had to be supported by a system approach to the urban hierarchy. These analysts began to look to market towns and rural service centers as a way of tying together these related concerns. The idea is to equip urban places to better serve and support agricultural development, while providing better administration, basic infrastructure and services, and employment to the growing numbers of urban people (Baldwin and Chetwynd, 1979; Huber and Posada, 1980). By the mid-1970s the OAS had set up a program of "rural-urban development," and AID's Development Support Bureau was starting a demonstration effort called "urban functions in rural development" (Chetwynd, 1982; Huber and Posada, 1980; Chetwynd and Huber interviews, 1983).

During the same 1960s mid-1970s period, municipal development received special attention by Latin American governments and AID. Municipal development institutions were established or strengthened in Costa Rica, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Bolivia, Paraguay, Honduras, and Panama. In some instances this was done through a banking institution also providing technical assistance and training (models were IFAM in Costa Rica, FUNDACOMUN in Venezuela). In other instances one agency was charged with banking, and another, usually a public administration institute, with the technical assistance and training functions (as in Guatemala and Panama). The goals of these programs were to strengthen municipal infrastructure,

improve administration, promote local participation, and generally to decentralize certain development functions to local governments which on paper were empowered to carry them out (Gall and Corbett, 1973; Gall, Corbett, and Padilla, 1975; Gall, Corbett, Carr, and Padilla, 1976). Unfortunately, as further analysis in Section III shows, we can now see that this activity was running on a parallel rather than a merged track with the regional-urban-rural thinking summarized below.

The municipalistas had strong logic behind them. The municipality, unlike the ceremonial province or department level, has real independent taxation authority and a formal role in providing services. It is close to the populace, at least physically, often elected, and is surrounded by rural areas over which it exercises territorial authority. It can solve local-scale problems locally, easing the burden on central agencies, and can adapt national programs to local needs and conditions. It is closely intertwined with local business and landowning interests which can be tapped for nongovernmental development.

Municipal reform, as we defined it in consultation with Costa Ricans in 1973, would increase the ability of municipal administrators to do the following:

1. Meet the real and general needs of the municipalities' voters and citizens in the order of importance which is perceived by those citizens;
2. Integrate the work of many local organizations and institutions of the central government working in social, economic, and physical development in the cantons;
3. Plan and execute projects within the canton itself and work together with other municipalities, regional entities, and government agencies;
4. Broaden the viewpoint of municipal council members toward their duties as leaders of local development;
5. Administer a fair and efficient local tax system;
6. Attract, utilize, and retain good technical and administrative personnel;
7. Strengthen and responsibly manage the financial affairs of the municipality; and
8. Deliver a complete and reliable basic infrastructure and services (Gall and Corbett, 1973).

This grand vision defined the ideal state, but was not always shared by executives of the municipal development institutions (MDI) and their technician/politician colleagues. Where it was shared, the MDI was not too often capable of delivering assistance to local governments on more than two or three of these points. The many factors contributing to this outcome are discussed below.

B. Decentralization--the Ideal and the Realities of Change

The Director of the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration described in 1978 the ongoing tension in Latin America between the pressures for decentralization of development and administration on one hand and the forces which impede it on the other (Lordello de Mello, 1978). To paraphrase his points, the constraining forces are historical, political, and economic:

1. The history of highly centralized government which tends to draw the business community to the political/administrative power center;
2. A continuing trend to centralize taxation, along with revenue-sharing schemes which perpetuate the penury of local governments;
3. Underfunding of municipal development banks and technical assistance agencies by governments and donors, which tends to keep them on the margin of competition for attention and resources of national development decision-makers;
4. Lack of definition of the role of local governments and their supporting agencies within national development plans and programs;
5. Unwillingness of governments and local development agencies to focus or target their limited resources on places where potential payoffs are greatest (rather than giving a bit to each locality);
6. Insufficient funding and attention to technical assistance and training for local governments; and
7. The inherent threat perceived by many authoritarian regimes from the kind of democracy which effective local government involves.

On this last point, Austin also raised a cautionary note for planners of municipal development programs (Austin, 1976). In

his words, "It seems obvious that strengthening the ability of local governments to articulate and solve problems will have profound political implications in the early stages of program development" (p. 22).

The idea of an autonomous local government has deep roots in Spanish history, colonial practice, and modern Latin American thought. In recent years, it has been countered not only by the factors cited above, but by two others noted from personal observation: (1) exercise of the regional development alternative by governments and donors, and (2) pressure by donors to produce.

In Section I.A, passing reference was made to the growing number of regional development authorities in Latin America. These organizations, established on the model of the Tennessee Valley Authority and based analytically on natural resource inventories, have been supported by governments and multilateral as well as bilateral donor agencies. The end product of the regional master plans, which the regional development corporations are established to carry out, is a list of "bankable" projects for presentation to agencies like AID, the Inter-American Development Bank, or the World Bank. Private lenders or investors are also encouraged to move the identified projects from the prefeasibility stage through in-depth feasibility studies and, for those ventures which appear to be viable, to the construction stage. The projects range from highways, to sawmills, electrical nets, food processing centers, and air-fields, to schools, health centers, and community centers. The plans are based not only on inventories of soils, forests, minerals, and water resources, but also on studies of national economic trends, demographic projections, and social needs. The studies are performed by national as well as international technicians.

The regional development corporations are legal entities authorized to broker projects, to fund projects directly (often from specially allocated taxes, central government grants, or international loans or donations), and to coordinate the work of sectoral agencies in the region. The managing boards are drawn from both government agencies and private interest groups. Salaries and benefits of the staff are often set at levels above those of the national or subnational government agencies.

Even for an advocate of integrated, systems approaches to area development, the regional development entities are anomalous in many respects, and create a new set of problems for both national and local agencies already in existence (CINDER, 1977). Taken as a group in Latin America in the late 1970s, the budgets of these regional development entities amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars, and the investments which they

attract or control total in the billions. They are highly technocratic, top-down in orientation, and often represent the extension of a central authority to the local level. They absorb revenues and talent which might be used to strengthen local governments already operating in the areas. They frequently give only cursory, protocol attention to local government, and deal directly with community groups whose energies might better be used to stir action by local government on small-scale projects, as in the Syracuse regional development project in Peru (PRODERIN, Seminario Taller, 1982). While regional corporations are chartered as temporary agencies and are assessed by CINDER as "fragile," I find that insufficient attention has been given to their effects on long-standing local government entities, and the potential for linkages, for representation of local authorities on their boards, and for strengthening rather than bypassing or detracting from local governments' development work. Another area of concern is that often these corporations' investments, or the projects brokered by them, fall ultimately to local governments to operate and maintain. These often are new burdens on the already limited financial and managerial capacities of local governments. The projects are seldom as self-financing as they were projected to be in feasibility studies written to attract initial construction or investment financing.

In those instances where funding has been provided for municipal development, many observers find that decentralization has been hampered by the pressure to produce a given number of subprojects (Gall, Corbett, and Padilla, 1976; Hicks, 1982; Kent, 1980). Donor loans have been made for short time periods (three to five years), and thus pressure exists to place subloans as quickly as possible to meet preestablished disbursement projections. This then produces a situation in which the following things happen:

- Rapid start-up of lending activity is necessary, so preplanning of priority areas of lending either does not occur or is ignored; and
- The institution-building training and technical assistance activity (which is by its nature slow and gradual) takes second place.

This overtakes the needed efforts to reform municipal personnel and tax laws, to define a clear role for local governments in the overall scheme of development, to build linkages with regional plans, and to upgrade the quality of local development plans and service delivery. In short, the capacity-building which would make decentralization effective is bulldozed aside by the pressure to disburse funds for works. This topic will be explored further below.

III. AID's INVOLVEMENT

This section reviews the results of comparative evaluations done on municipal development activities for AID's Latin America Bureau in the 1970s, and the more current findings of analysts who have been asked to assess such projects. The section concludes with an overview of current AID activities which touch on local government development in Latin America.

A. Municipal Development in the Mid-1970s

During the period 1973-1976, my colleagues and I conducted evaluations, technical assistance, and project design work in municipal development, principally in Costa Rica and Guatemala, while reviewing situations in a number of other countries as well (see Appendix B, documents 9-12). Our composite assessment is presented below.

1. Subproject Lending Activities of Municipal Development Banks

The kinds of municipal subprojects that were being supported were predominantly basic urban infrastructure and social services for town dwellers. These included potable water and sewage or drainage systems, street paving and lighting, municipal markets and slaughterhouses, and public buildings (clinics, schools, town halls, and bus terminals). These projects had their greatest benefits for rural town dwellers, particularly business persons in commerce, transportation, and food marketing. In only a few cases were the subprojects of a type we called "economic infrastructure" which would directly benefit the rural activities of the municipalities and improve their tax bases, such as wholesale food storage and distribution centers, feeder road upgrading, etc. In brief, the subprojects reflected the traditional concerns of the urban leaders.

We did find that the lending activities of the MDIs were widely distributed, reaching to communities frequently low on the priorities of national sanitation, public works, or urban development agencies.

While for the most part the subprojects were well done from an engineering viewpoint, we were less impressed by the economic and financial analysis, fearing that many of the facilities would become obsolete and a continuing financial burden for municipalities. Some of the markets and terminals were managed directly by the municipality, while others were run by local business people under contract.

2. Technical Assistance and Training

The focus of this assistance was on the basics, principally local tax cadasters, records, collection systems, and basic budgeting, accounting, and financial management. Courses and manuals were being prepared or revised. Instructor/advisors were public finance persons who had worked for the controller general's office or had taught in an economics faculty or public administration institute. Often the focus was on ensuring that client towns could repay the municipal bank's loans, although activity was also directed at general improvement in municipal financial management.

The training was largely didactic, emphasizing learning about the many kinds of taxes, licenses, and service rates, and filling in forms.

We found much room for improvement in these activities. Coordination between the lending activity and the technical assistance activity was often weak, especially in situations such as in Guatemala where a separate institution was responsible for technical assistance and training. But lack of coordination was also evident in agencies like IFAM (Costa Rica), which had both functions under one roof. There was seldom a conscious tactic of working out a plan of activities with the municipality, combining subproject planning and execution with general improvements in local administration.

Technical assistance and training were not being offered in such areas as basic needs surveys, community relations and participation, project development and management, financial planning (beyond the required one-year line-item budget), or local personnel administration.

The turnover of personnel in the municipalities was a widespread problem, often undermining the training offered by the MDIs.

3. Reform of Local Government Systems

Municipal reform laws in Latin America have tended to emphasize modifications in the local governments' tax authorities, and to give broader responsibility to municipalities for additional services and infrastructure. The problem is that these changes, while necessary, are seldom sufficient to have the desired impact on building local capacity. Thorough municipal reform would involve elements of the following:

- Reforming the municipal code(s) where they are outdated or nonexistent, focusing on such areas as clarifying the role of municipal government; developing modern, progressive, and simplified local tax provisions; providing professional status and job security for municipal employees; providing safeguards against municipal corruption; setting standards for elected officials and extending their terms of office or allowing successive terms where terms are two years; and separating local government elections from national ones so that local elections focus on local issues rather than on national or party matters.
- Providing financial incentives and channels for domestic capital and cash reserves to go into municipal projects, and setting up guidelines for municipal credit, bond issues, and international financing of local projects.
- Establishing national civil service incentives for field service, such as special allowances; basing promotions on field service; and opening special careers in regional and local planning and administration.
- Working toward an official classification system for municipalities that goes beyond population numbers alone and provides a better basis for development planning and fund allocations (Gall, Corbett, Carr, and Padilla, 1976, pp. 60-61).

Our view in 1976 was that without serious attention to these points, municipal development projects and activities were in danger of being symbolic, palliative, and probably wasteful.

AID did sponsor some studies of municipal finance and tax legislation that were intended to clarify and simplify that aspect of local government. The impact of those studies was not apparent in 1976, and the recommended broadening into such potentially sensitive areas as election and personnel reform and defining a planning/development role of municipalities beyond the traditional town-centered focus were new concepts at that time.

4. Municipal Development Institution Planning and Management

As implied above, we found that the MDIs were strong in their ability to respond to municipal requests for basic urban infrastructure and to design and see to the construction of

such subprojects. What was most notably lacking was a strategy and planning focus for institutional and economic development of the municipalities. The agencies lacked a data base on municipal conditions and finances, had not formulated priorities for project types or types of municipalities, and therefore scattered their scarce resources in an uncoordinated way. They had little information about the range of needs in the municipalities and the potential demand for their services. They had not projected the amounts that shared taxes might yield to their own and to municipal budgets. Therefore their own program and financial plans were short-range and reactive in nature.

By 1975-1976, AID was working with INFOM in Guatemala to develop a plan-based "market town" focus (Gall and Eighmy, 1975), USAID/Costa Rica was working with IFAM on a "rural window" loan, and the BANMA loan in Honduras was being prepared by USAID based on diagnostic data about municipal needs and the potential for better-focused AID support for local government development programs.

B. Update: Observations in the Early 1980s

During the past two years a number of observers have assessed the state of local government in Latin America for AID and the Organization of American States (OAS). In short, while some of the problems and opportunities for municipal development cited above have been attended to, much has remained the same.

The subproject lending activities of the MDIs continue to focus on basic town infrastructure in most instances. Even in Honduras, where the intent of the Government of Honduras/AID project was to support rural development, feeder roads or facilities in support of agricultural development are the exception rather than the rule (Huber and Posada, 1980; interviews with Greytack and Hicks, 1983). The OAS team went to five countries looking for linkages between town development and agriculture, and found that in none of the countries reviewed (Brazil, Honduras, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru) was there a conscious policy or program to channel investments in municipal development in terms of a concept of an urban hierarchy and rural-urban linkages. They evaluated not only the OAS's own regional development projects, but programs of such agencies as BANMA and the Municipal Development Institute of Paraguay, both established with AID inputs.

In Honduras' BANMA a serious problem of loan repayment was identified (Hicks, 1982). In Bolivia's SENDU, where the emphasis was on street paving and drainage, serious problems were found with the design, execution, and supervision of subprojects, 75 percent of which were in arrears on only 19 projects

undertaken in five years! (Kent, 1980). In the countries just mentioned, as well as in Costa Rica, maintenance and management of the projects were found to be a difficulty for the municipalities once the projects were completed. Administration was poor, costs and rates were miscalculated, and utilization of the markets, slaughterhouses, and other "self-financing" facilities was well below that projected during loan approval.

The technical assistance and training functions have not fared well either, with the possible exception of BANMA (Greytack interview, 1983). This MDI does appear to have developed an active approach to financial and administrative reform which is showing results for the municipalities (though apparently not improving the repayment rate on subproject loans). IFAM's technical assistance and training function has withered drastically in recent years (Olinger interview, 1983). SENDU's technical assistance activity has been hampered by lack of support from the top and a very small staff without the means to travel regularly (Kent, 1980). In no case did these observers report that attention was being given to training leaders and administrators of local governments in project identification, planning, and broader areas of management. The limited technical assistance is still narrowly focused on tax administration, budgeting, and accounting. While all observers agree that this is essential to the survival of local governments, in my view it does not represent the kind of attention to the expenditure side of the equation which is also basic to capacity-building.

The kinds of reforms which would simplify the local tax structures, assure predictable flows of centrally shared revenues, and provide for a more stable personnel structure in the municipalities (essential for technical assistance and training to "take") have not yet occurred in countries where AID is assisting local development.

The MDIs appear to suffer from the same problems we found earlier. They lack a sense of strategy and a clearly defined place among the national agencies whose operations affect localities. Partly as a consequence, the MDIs and their client municipalities are competing unsuccessfully for scarce investment funds.

SENDU and BANMA have severe cash management problems and face decapitalization as their subloans are not repaid. IFAM is going to install a municipal data bank, first recommended to them 10 years ago, with assistance from Research Triangle Institute (Hicks interview, 1983), but none of the other agencies has taken this basic step of assembling data from existing national sources and their own contacts on socioeconomic conditions, financial status, and administrative or developmental capacity.

There are of course many causes of this situation, some of them beyond AID's ability to change. Municipal government in Latin America is highly political. Special grants, arranged through representatives to the national legislature, and special crash programs to upgrade some piece of the country's infrastructure may undermine the plans and influence of the MDI. Heads of MDIs change (and sometimes the most valuable senior technicians) and, with them, the priorities of the agencies. Plans to focus resources can be diluted by the something-for-everyone inclination of national governments. At the municipal level, mayors and key employees may change as often as every two years, and in Bolivia, more often than that (Kent, 1980).

In some measure, however, AID can be faulted for this outcome. The days when AID had full-time public administration advisors on its mission staffs is long gone, and the work of planning and implementing municipal development projects has fallen in recent years to rural development or multisectoral officers. These persons cannot give their full attention to these projects, as they are often responsible for either another major effort or a number of disparate projects. It is understandable that they may not be aware of AID's history in this field, or aware of activities, studies, training offerings, and the experience of other donors. Implementation then is not the kind of close teamwork in institution-building which is desired, but more often consists of periodic meetings and exchanges of correspondence, focused on disbursement rates, procurement, and compliance with loan conditions. The "pressure to produce," to follow the project design blueprint (to use a Development Alternatives, Inc. term), comes back to haunt yet again.

C. Parallel or Related Activities Affecting Local Government

Interestingly enough, in various parts of AID, some very pertinent and timely activities are being undertaken which bear on the problems highlighted above. Those of most interest include activities to improve financial management and revenue generation at the local level (McCullough et al., 1982; Syracuse, 1981-1982); a project to integrate rural towns in regional/rural development (Chetwynd, 1982; Evans, 1982; Rhoda, 1982); a study of development planning in secondary cities (Rivkin, 1982); guidelines for institution-building (Barnet and Engel, 1982); a new project to explore energy- and resource-saving approaches to urban management; and the establishment of an urban programs unit in the Private Enterprise Bureau (Olinger interview, 1983).

Without going into a description of all of these projects and studies, which are nearly all sponsored by the Multisectoral Office of the Science and Technology Bureau, one is struck by some of the common threads which run through them. First, they all share the view that strengthening local government is important and necessary, both to support rural development and to contend with rapid urban growth throughout the hierarchy of towns and cities. There is a consensus that national institutions must be strengthened in order to achieve strengthening at the local level. The national agency (or agencies) need to have a clear mandate and a strong technical assistance role coupled with investment capability--one or the other alone will not achieve the desired results. Local government needs to be tied into national and regional plans in an explicit way, as a link to community needs and to tailor programs to specific places.

Several of the experts mentioned the value of closer communications and teamwork between donor agencies, in part to exchange knowledge and experiences at the headquarters level (a lack encountered while researching this paper). Perhaps this teamwork is even more important at the country level, where resources affecting local development are being provided through several channels, sometimes by donors pursuing conflicting aims in terms of building the capacity of local governments.

The Inter-American Development Bank is building a portfolio of projects for secondary and smaller city development, and struggling with the "horizontal" nature of local government. Their integrated urban projects (some of them executed through municipal development institutions) are testing grounds. In this context the sectoral focus (whether public works, agricultural marketing, or regional development) may determine which unit of the Bank handles the project, and whether the emphasis is on physical accomplishment or institutional change (Daughters interview, 1983).

The World Bank is sponsoring a wide range of urban projects throughout Latin America, with varying combinations of institutional and physical development foci. The spatial dimension, urban-rural relationship, and municipal management and finance are receiving attention in Bank projects. The urban development strategy is being reconsidered, with movement toward a concern for "urban efficiency" (Nassau interview, 1983).

These donors' experiences and their efforts to provide aid to the nonprimate cities are based on the widely held realization that sectoral investment programs will have limited scope and declining benefits if new facilities cannot be managed and

maintained and if growing tax bases are not tapped for complementary investments at the local level. Ongoing interchange among AID, the IDB, and the World Bank will be of great benefit as these institutions pursue their different but related activities in Latin America.

IV. SYNTHESIS: LESSONS FOR APPLICATION IN THE 1980s

The essence of this sojourn back into the realm of local government development is that while lessons have been learned by AID on a cognitive level, they have yet to be applied behaviorally. Before discussing how this might happen, it is useful to present a summary of findings in terms of the framework offered by the Asia field team on local government (AID, 1983).

A. Whether to . . . ?

This is the question of whether AID should put resources into programs of local government development. These observations are pulled together under the headings offered in the Asia report, combining them in a few instances where their presentation singly might be redundant. While I cannot claim to have conducted a current "behind the scenes" assessment to back up what is written here, these issues were explored with people like Wendell Schaeffer, whose span of involvement goes back over at least 20 years, as well as with David Robinson and David Greytack of the Syracuse project, and Jim Hicks of Research Triangle Institute, who have first-hand knowledge from their involvement during the past two or three years. I have of course drawn on my personal experience.

1. Historical Factors

As described in Section I, local government centered in towns has a long history. It combines the Spanish tradition of the cabildo with a town-centered culture. Municipalities gained and waned in importance during and after the colonial era, but continue to be the most permanent component of subnational government in Latin America. The development problems of Latin America are changing as urban growth accelerates throughout the hierarchy of towns and cities.

2. Sociocultural and Ideological Factors

Latin Americans have mixed feelings about their rural areas and people, at times acknowledging their dependence on them to supply their growing cities, at times romanticizing the pleasures of rural life and the simple peasants, and at other times showing disdain for the "indios," especially in those countries with significant indigenous populations.

There are also mixed feelings about placing significant responsibility in the hands of local officials, knowing how politics can operate, fearing corruption and mismanagement, and yet recognizing that many needs can be better met at that level.

3. Legal/Legislative Factors

It is safe to say that the legal framework exists for pursuing some measure of local government development in nearly every Latin American country. However, many of the laws are antiquated and possibly contradictory in their effect. The machinery to make the laws effective is often lacking. At the same time, there is certainly scope for simplifying tax codes, regularizing municipal employment, perhaps legitimizing a city manager system (as recently happened in Venezuela), and requiring regional planners and corporations to include municipal leaders and other local representatives in their activities and program deliberations.

4. Political Demand

By comparison with other parts of the Third World, governments in Latin America are stable and self-confident, with the obvious exceptions of Bolivia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Local groups can and do express their needs and interests through their local governments and legislative representatives, or by petitions directly to the president of the country, and they are often heard. As urban growth is spread more evenly, the calls by municipal officials for assistance, requests for training and investment funds, and other demands are mounting. Associations of mayors have been influential in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic in the past, and scope exists in most countries of Latin America for such advocacy to redirect development plans and budgets to localities' advantage.

5. Policy and Bureaucratic Factors

The picture here is mixed, and the balance of forces will have to be assessed in each country. During the 1960s the municipalista movement gained strength in several Latin American countries, and an inter-American municipal forum was established, with the presidency rotated every few years among countries. Municipal and tax reform laws were passed, municipal banks were set up, and donor interest was raised. At the same time, as we have noted, national and regional planning offices were set up to direct major investments, some local taxation power was pulled back for direct central administration, and other steps were taken which seem to have marginalized the municipalities.

The questions for assessment in country studies will be a determination of (1) the current trend in local development (e.g., decentralization in Peru, recentralization in Honduras) and, (2) where positive change is happening, whether it represents a broad-based commitment or a temporary phase under a specific president or party.

Another question relates to the bureaucratic choice of an instrument for local government development. Based on experience, I would counsel against a purely banking institution that did not have the means to actively pursue institutional improvements. Splitting the responsibility between two or more agencies (as was tried in Panama and Guatemala) is also likely to cause difficulties in a region where interagency collaboration has not been notably successful, at least at the national level.

6. Local Capacity and Resources

Local problem-solving exists alongside dependence on central agencies throughout Latin America. Observers over the years have seen remarkable instances of local entrepreneurs joining forces to pave the main street of the town, to provide electric power, or to set up a water supply. Municipalities in Latin America run the full range of capabilities, from medium-size cities with a full complement of technical and administrative offices and services, to rural crossroads where the part-time mayor, a treasurer, and a secretary preside over an essentially ceremonial institution.

One of the challenges posed some years back to planners of local government development was to establish a set of key indicators of municipal capacity and to organize local government accordingly to form the basis for assessing needs for technical

assistance, training, equipment (for construction as well as administration), and other interventions.

Municipal governments of course draw on the local offices of central agencies, to the extent that they can, for guidance in designing projects, for funds or technology for maintaining services and equipment, and for other kinds of help. Unless the central agency has been charged with providing this assistance and has so notified its field staff, the municipality's ability to get help will depend on individual relationships and ad hoc deals.

The consensus of many who have worked in municipal development in recent years is that apart from the most poor and isolated places, there are many untapped resources, both human and financial, available to local governments in Latin America. One of the realities is that the local landed and commercial leaders are frequently members of the municipal council. They do not always see the advantage in having vigorous administration of the property tax or of betterment levies, since they are potentially the most taxable. As the towns grow and educational levels rise, there is a potential labor pool of younger, better educated people to be drawn into local government once the financial base has been established to attract and hold them.

The opportunity here is to figure out where to break into the cycle of low revenues (even where the base for raising them exists), lack of managerial and developmental talent, inability to plan worthwhile projects which would improve the tax base, and around again to square one.

7. Local Awareness and Politics

Participation in local politics appears to be expanding. Traditionally, as noted earlier, it was the purview of the descendants of the town "nobility" who viewed their tenure much as Schurz depicted it (see the quote in Section I.B of this paper). Now, with the growth of "invasion barrios," many of them organized for home and neighborhood upgrading projects, community-level influence is being brought to bear on local policies. Jim Hicks observed interesting cases of this in Honduras in his recent travels, and I have seen similar trends in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Panama.

At the same time, outside the town center of the municipality, rural people have traditionally received little in the way of services or investments from the local government, and therefore demand and expect little. They have their geographic and special-purpose organizations which work with national

sectoral programs (health, agricultural extension, rural water supply, cooperatives, etc.) operating in the rural areas. In larger towns, known to have road repair equipment or to be tying into a regional electric grid, a delegation of farmers may approach the mayor or council to ask for help in extending a feeder road or to tap into the electric system. The linking of urban and rural needs, interests, and programs at the local level (such as that proposed by Huber, Chetwynd, and others) is necessary and possible, but will require a conscious strategy of improving communications and local planning processes and changing some attitudes about the interdependence of the two groups.

The private sector/public sector distinction could benefit from closer examination in localities in Latin America, but my impression is that it is a nonissue. There is no clear split between private and public interests (for some of the reasons alluded to above). Latin America's tradition is to rely heavily on private investment. Cases already exist where municipalities have created the plant (a market or slaughterhouse), and then turned it over to private management under contract. More of this might be encouraged, to see if services are better managed and if it results in reduced administrative overhead for the municipalities. However, since the management of some of these services is used as political patronage, the idea might not go very far, or if it did, there is no certainty that it would result in better services or management.

8. AID Strategy and Capabilities/Other Donors

AID is of course handicapped by its own personnel turnover, political and philosophical changes at the top, and by the general trend to expect public employees to accomplish the same amount of work, or even more, with fewer resources. Local government development is a long-haul proposition, requiring at least some acquaintance with a variety of subjects, some consistency of treatment over that long haul, and the ability to integrate a number of disciplines so that inputs (revenues) produce improved outputs (development projects and basic services) which are related to national and regional needs and programs. On the other hand, AID has to its credit a history of relatively more concern than other donors for institutional aspects of development. The agency has made a considerable investment, largely through the Science and Technology Bureau, in evaluating experience, trying new approaches, and producing valuable guides. Most notable and practical are Richard Rhoda's recent book on urban-regional planning, the Research Triangle Institute study on urban financial management, and the Rivkin report, all reviewed for this study (see Appendix B, documents 22, 20, and 23).

AID missions must decide whether their host country's situation, policies, and environment suggest that the role of local government can be enhanced, and whether they (the missions) have, or can obtain, the kind of broad-based, informed people it needs to launch something new or work with the national government to substantially redirect that which exists.

AID need not be the sole source of financing of this effort, but might share the load and define separate but complementary roles with other donors such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, which share many of these concerns. This would of course require agreement of the host government and probably a lot of talking through of goals, objectives, roles, and en-route oversight and coordination.

B. When Not . . . ?

Under what conditions should AID pass up the opportunity for involvement in local government development? Given its history, in most situations there is some justification, often quite strong, for having some degree of involvement with local development. The few exceptions include situations such as El Salvador and perhaps Guatemala, where personal security concerns would limit both host nationals' and foreign advisors' ability to travel freely in the rural areas. Given the dismal record of SENDU, one might conclude that Bolivia's instability at the central level is a sign that local government development is not worth the effort. That would be erroneous, partly because I think that the SENDU project was ill-conceived and badly managed from the start by both AID and the Government of Bolivia, and because I am informed that the Departmental Development Corporations which have their own sources of revenue and effective staff have persevered in their development work despite political changes in La Paz, a model which is suggestive in terms of municipal development goals.

I would say that a government which (a) shows no interest in at least some elements of municipal reform, (b) will not look at its urban system selectively in regional/rural terms, and (c) will not encourage interagency dialogue (among national planners, technical agencies, public administration, and finance experts) on ways to strengthen local government would not be a candidate for a sales job by AID for local development. It might, however, be a candidate for extended "policy dialogue."

Given what we have seen so far, the more interesting questions are the next ones involving how and where to intervene.

C. How to . . . ?

In the Latin American context, where AID has now compiled a significant history, the questions of strategy deserve critical reexamination. As we have learned, the development dynamics (demographic and economic) suggest that urban needs may outweigh rural ones as urban populations surge during the next two or three decades. The evidence is that, despite AID's best efforts to provide different kinds of support over the last 15 or so years, local governments are scarcely more able than before to manage the accelerating growth and complexity of the towns, and even less able to attend to functions in support of rural development (e.g., a reliable food supply for the cities and alternative employment for the displaced and landless).

The Asia team raised three provocative questions on the strategy of AID intervention:

- What are the alternative types and levels of local government that could be assisted?
- What sectoral or substantive areas are most needed, and which are the most likely entry points at these levels?
- What are the alternative scales (e.g., single province, multiprovince), timing, and phasing? (AID, 1983, pp. A18-19).

These questions must be answered according to each country's circumstances, but some general guidance seems to emerge from the analysis so far.

Choices among levels in Latin America include province/state/department, municipal, and community, as well as regional. Another alternative emerges from the Potosi project, the "micro-region," which is an analytical category which may or may not conform to existing political divisions, but involves a settlement and its area of influence (Evans, 1982).

Apart from Bolivia, which has elected to give major support to departmental development corporations, and countries which have taken a regional approach in specially defined natural resource or border areas, the municipality has been the focus of attention, however lukewarm that attention has been over time. It has always been there, on paper it has the authority to act, it encompasses rural and urban concerns, and it is close to beneficiaries yet can operate on a scale larger than the community. Regions have the disadvantage of impermanence and fragility, being the creations of technocrats and often seen as a threat to the established order. Microregions

are intellectually attractive, but like regions defined by planners, they must be treated outside or across existing divisions, and require a lot of education. I once proposed a re-alignment of municipalities to conform to a master regional plan in the Darien region of Panama, and was greeted with an indulgent smile by a senior Panamanian municipalista (Gall and Pinilla, 1976). "I can't argue with your logic," he said, "but I know that recommendation will go nowhere."

In my view, the choices in Latin America are limited, and the municipality tends to come out as the prime target, flawed and marginal as it may be.

The second question is one that deserves attention in light of what has gone before. AID has participated in projects to assist municipalities across the board, sectorally, substantively, and geographically. Preference has been given to using AID funds for smaller, primarily rural places, and technical assistance and training have focused on strengthening financial administration. But in practice, and under the pressure to produce within a three- or five-year time frame, project selectivity and a number of other good intentions have gone by the board.

Selectivity, an issue highlighted in the Rivkin study (1982, pp. 40-41), seems to be a vital point. AID should not agree to foster assistance to all municipalities for all manner of projects and activities, at least as long as its funding for municipal development continues to be doled out in amounts under \$5 million. Based on careful study, AID should reach agreements to focus its resources, along with those of the MDI and other national agencies assisting local government, on certain places for certain things. If AID is serious about the internal logic of its programming and about building into its mission programs the work of the R&D people in the Science and Technology Bureau, certain sectoral and substantive foci between prominent:

1. Urban-rural linkages (focused on food supply and non-farm employment)
2. Energy-efficient cities
3. Improved planning of secondary cities experiencing rapid growth
4. Sustained attention to financial planning, management, and administration to enable real autonomy to emerge and sustain itself.

In a way, the first two points are ends, and the second two are means to those ends. While conceptually I would agree with the idea that municipal or other local government development is a valid end in itself (which was the original rationale for much of the municipal development work in Latin America), I think that a lesson learned, and overdue for implementation, is that local government development must serve higher order, tangible purposes of an economic nature. We were already inclined that way in 1976, making recommendations to focus on economic infrastructure. Armed with knowledge of subsequent history, I am even more convinced that this is a major need. The goals of urban/rural/regional development for smaller towns which show promise and of managing energy and other resources more efficiently in larger cities can capture the interest of both national and local officials in a way that ideal concepts of local government do not.

The question of alternative scales is less susceptible to prescription. It will depend on the extent of existing commitments to localities, the willingness of governments to experiment in several places on the one hand, or to limit the use of outside resources to a few places on the other. A variable strategy may be needed, offering one type of emphasis (on energy saving) to cities higher in the hierarchy, and a different package of loans and assistance (in support of rural growth) to smaller but potentially important places.

Timing, staging, and tactics will be affected by whether or not there is a history of municipal development supported by AID, the locally perceived degree of success of that effort, and by the missions' evaluations of the depth and probable longevity of national commitment to a specific strategy implemented through local authorities.

D. Conclusions

Many lessons have been learned by AID about supporting local government development in Latin America, and it is time to apply those lessons in countries willing to take a fresh look and commit resources, political capital, and talented people to the effort. The goals should be focused on economic benefits and institutional strengthening at both national and local levels. The potential for a significant role for local government has been established. AID has already invested in a number of "how-to" guides to overall management for such programs, urban and regional planning, financial management, and related topics. Other donors' experience can be more purposefully tapped as well. Demographics and the overload on national institutions provide the motivation. Let's get on with it.

APPENDIX A

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

1. Allan Austin, State University College, Fredonia, New York
2. Harry Carr, Organization of American States
3. Eric Chetwynd, AID, Bureau for Science and Technology
4. Robert Daughters, Inter-American Development Bank
5. Hugh Evans, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
6. Robert Fox, Inter-American Development Bank
7. David Greytack, Syracuse University
8. Arthur Heyman, Organization of American States
9. James Hicks, Research Triangle Institute
10. Philip Huber, Organization of American States
11. Mike Murphy, International City Management Association
12. Adrienne Nassau, World Bank
13. David Olinger, AID/PRE
14. David Robinson, Syracuse University
15. Kirk Rogers, Organization of American States
16. Wendell Schaeffer, NASPAA
17. Marilyn Silberfein, AID, Bureau for Science and Technology
18. James Smith, AID, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
19. Herb Werlin, Council on International Urban Liaison

APPENDIX B

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